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ABSTRACT

This instructional module on social aspects of aging is one in a block of 10 modules designed to provide the human services worker who works with older adults with basic information regarding the aging process. An introduction provides an overview of the module content. A listing of general objectives follows. Four sections present informative material on each of the four objectives. Topics are demographics, knowing and treating older adults as real people, alternative views of how older adults can or should age successfully, and changing roles of older adults in today's society and the history or forces behind these changes. Other contents include a summary and listings of selected readings and additional resources. (YLB)

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BLOCK A

Basic Knowledge of the Aging Process

MODULE A·4

Social Aspects of Aging

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ELDERLY SERVICE WORKERS' TRAINING PROJECT

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SOCIAL ASPECTS OF AGING

MODULE A.4

THE ELDERLY SERVICE WORKERS' TRAINING PROJECT WISHES TO EXPRESS APPRECIATION OF THE FOLLOWING INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE "SOCIAL ASPECTS OF AGING" MODULE.

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INTRODUCTION

THIS MODULE WILL PRESENT TO YOU SOME OF THE CURRENT THOUGHTS ON THE SOCIAL ASPECTS OF AGING. IN THIS REGARD, YOU WILL FIRST LEARN ABOUT THE DEMOGRAPHICS OF AGING. THAT IS, YOU WILL LEARN HOW MANY ADULTS ARE OLD, SOME OF THEIR CHARACTERISTICS, AND THEIR LIFE EXPECTANCIES. THIS IS FOLLOWED BY A DISCUSSION OF THE WAYS IN WHICH OLDER ADULTS CAN BE STEREOTYPED AND DISCRIMINATED AGAINST, AND HOW TO AVOID STEREOTYPES AND DISCRIMINATION BY BEING CONSCIOUS OF TREATING OLDER ADULTS AS INDIVIDUALS AND NOT JUST A MEMBER OF THE OLD AGE GROUP. THE CHANGING EXPECTATIONS SOCIETY HAS HAD ON HOW "SUCCESSFUL" OLDER ADULTS BEHAVE, AND HOW SOCIETY HAS MOVED AWAY FROM A STRICT, SINGLE-MINDED VIEW WILL BE PRESENTED.

FINALLY, SOME HISTORICAL CHANGES THAT HAVE TAKEN PLACE WILL BE PRESENTED, REGARDING THE STATUS OR IMPORTANCE OF OLDER ADULTS IN OUR SOCIETY.

GENERAL OBJECTIVES

UPON COMPLETION OF THIS MODULE, YOU WILL:

(1) BE AWARE OF THE DEMOGRAPHICS OF AGING FOR THE PROVINCE OF MANITOBA.

(2) BE AWARE OF THE IMPORTANCE OF KNOWING AND TREATING OLDER ADULTS AS REAL PEOPLE.

(3) BE ABLE TO DESCRIBE ALTERNATIVE VIEWS OF HOW AN OLDER ADULT CAN OR SHOULD AGE SUCCESSFULLY.

(4) BE AWARE OF THE CHANGING ROLE OF OLDER ADULTS IN TODAY'S SOCIETY AND THE HISTORY OR FORCES BEHIND THESE CHANGES.

THE FOLLOWING SECTION WILL PRESENT, THE DEMOGRAPHICS OF AGING FOR THE PROVINCE OF MANITOBA.

DEMOGRAPHICS

UPON COMPLETION OF THIS SECTION, YOU WILL BE AWARE OF THE DEMOGRAPHICS OF AGING FOR THE PROVINCE OF MANITOBA.

OLDER ADULTS ARE GENERALLY DEFINED AS THOSE PEOPLE WHO ARE OVER 65 YEARS OF AGE. IF WE USE THIS DEFINITION, IN MANITOBA THERE ARE 121,805 OLDER ADULTS OR 11.9 PERCENT OF THE POPULATION.

THIS IS A SLIGHTLY HIGHER PERCENTAGE THAN YOU WOULD FIND IN CANADA AS A WHOLE (WHERE 9.7 PERCENT ARE OVER 65 YEARS OF AGE) OR IN COUNTRIES LIKE SWEDEN OR FRANCE.

TODAY, A MAN WHO IS 65, ON AVERAGE, CAN EXPECT TO LIVE 12 MORE YEARS, UNTIL HIS 77TH BIRTHDAY. A WOMAN WHO IS 65 HAS A LONGER LIFE EXPECTANCY. SHE WILL, ON AVERAGE, REACH THE AGE OF 79. THIS IS WHY YOU MIGHT SEE MORE OLDER WOMEN THAN OLDER MEN.

Characteristics of our older adults.

A few of the patterns in older adults' lives that may be different than at younger ages are examined. Specifically, gender, marital status, living arrangements, ethnicity, education and income are examined.

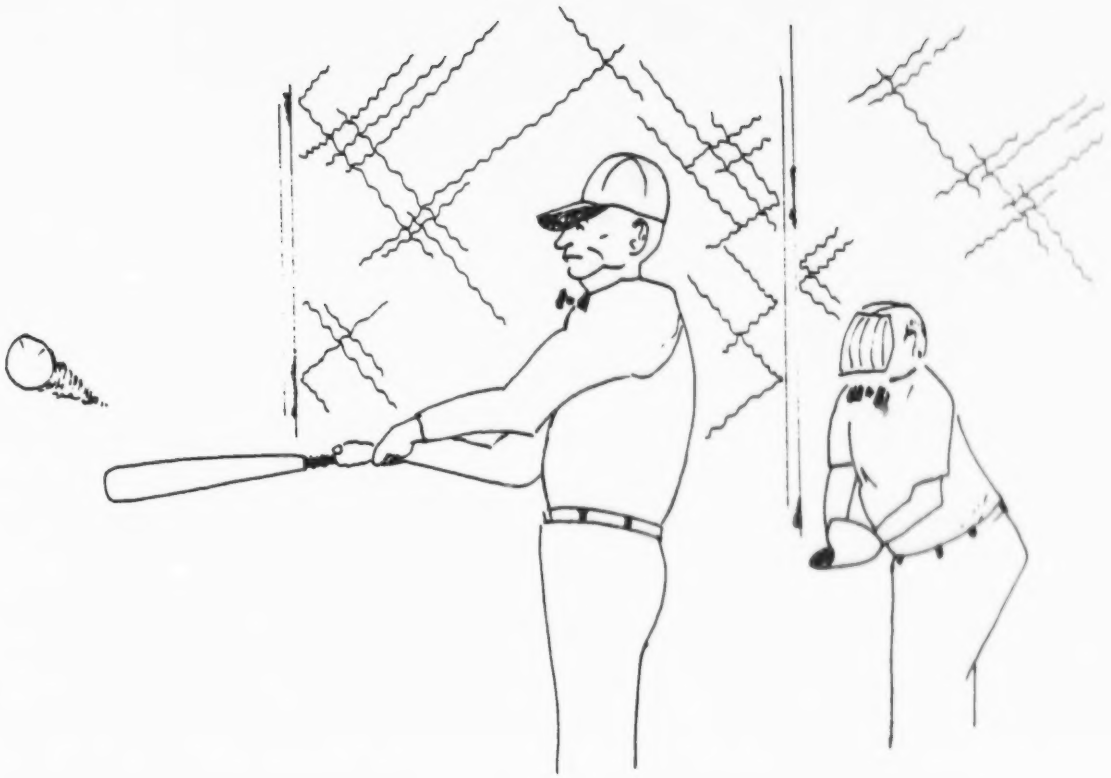
At birth, there are 100 girls for every 105 boys. That's almost an equal number between the two sexes. Hoever, because of their biology and lifestyle, men have more risks to their health throughout life, so that by age 65, women outnumber men 100 to 75. This continues

TO BE MORE UNEVEN AS THE YEARS PASS, SO THAT BY AGE 75, THERE ARE A 100 WOMEN TO EVERY 60 MEN. THESE BASIC LIFE EXPECTANCY DIFFERENCES, AS WE WILL FURTHER DESCRIBE, MEAN THAT A NUMBER OF OTHER DAILY EXPERIENCES ARE DIFFERENT FOR MEN AND WOMEN.

GETTING MARRIED WAS VERY IMPORTANT IN THE YOUTH OF OLDER ADULTS. ALMOST ALL OLDER ADULTS WERE ONCE MARRIED (NINE OUT OF TEN), AND ALMOST HALF (46 PERCENT) ARE STILL MARRIED. VERY FEW ARE LEGALLY SEPARATED OR DIVORCED. HOWEVER, WOMEN ARE MUCH MORE LIKELY THAN MEN TO BECOME WIDOWED. THOSE MEN, WHOSE WIVES DIE FIRST, HAVE A LOT MORE FEMALE COMPANIONS TO CHOOSE FROM, AND SO THEY ARE MORE LIKELY TO REMARRY THAN WIDOWED WOMEN.

SINCE WOMEN LIVE LONGER THAN MEN, MARRIED MEN CAN OFTEN LIVE AT HOME FOR A LONG TIME AFTER GETTING SICK. THE MAN WHO GROWS OLD WILL PROBABLY HAVE A WIFE WHO IS HEALTHIER THAN HE IS AND WHO CAN HELP LOOK AFTER HIM. THE OPPOSITE IS TRUE FOR WOMEN; THEY ARE NOT AS LIKELY TO HAVE SOMEONE AT HOME WHO CAN LOOK AFTER THEM. SO, THIS MAKES IT SEEM THAT THERE ARE MORE WOMEN THAN MEN WHO ARE VERY SICK AND NEED TO GET SPECIAL CARE.

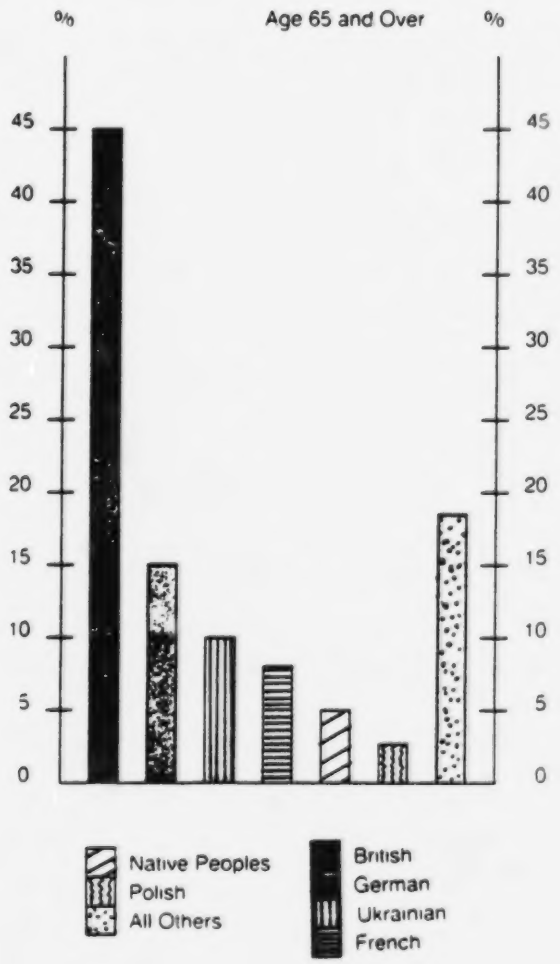
BESIDES BEING 65, ANOTHER DEFINITION OF BEING OLD SOMETIMES USED IS "BEING IN POOR HEALTH". SOMETIMES PEOPLE THINK THAT ALL ADULTS WHO ARE OVER 65 ARE UNHEALTHY. THIS IS NOT TRUE.



IN FACT, ONLY 6.7 PERCENT OF ALL OLDER MANITOBANS LIVE IN SOME FORM OF PERSONAL CARE HOME OR OTHER KIND OF INSTITUTION. THE VAST MAJORITY OF OLDER MANITOBANS LIVE -- AS THEY ALWAYS HAVE -- WITH THEIR HUSBANDS OR WIVES, WITH THEIR CHILDREN, OR ON THEIR OWN. IT IS TRUE THAT OLDER ADULTS ARE MORE LIKELY TO HAVE CHRONIC HEALTH PROBLEMS THAN YOUNGER PEOPLE, BUT THEY ARE NOT AS BADLY AFFECTED AS IS USUALLY THOUGHT.

MANITOBA IS A CULTURAL MOSAIC (NATIVE, BRITISH, FRENCH, GERMAN, UKRAINIAN, AND OTHERS) OF PEOPLE COMING FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE. THE FOLLOWING CHART ILLUSTRATES HOW MANY OLDER ADULTS ARE REPRESENTED IN EACH OF THE LARGEST CATEGORIES OF ETHNICITY.

PERCENTAGES OF THOSE AGE 65 AND OVER IN THE FIVE LARGEST ETHNIC GROUPS, MANITOBA, 1981.



Source: Statistics Canada **Population Language, Ethnic Origin, Religion, Place of Birth, Schooling, 1981 Census** Ottawa Minister of Supply and Services, April, 1984. CS93-931. Table 3, p 3-3 to 3-5

BECAUSE OF THE FACT THAT THESE OLDER ADULTS WERE BROUGHT UP IN HARSH ECONOMIC TIMES (THEY WERE BORN BEFORE 1920), AND EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS WERE NOT AS WIDESPREAD, MANY OLDER ADULTS HAVE LESS EDUCATION THAN PEOPLE TODAY. IN FACT, ABOUT 52 PERCENT OF OLDER ADULTS HAVE COMPLETED LESS THAN GRADE 9 EDUCATION. VERY FEW EVER ATTENDED COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY (18 PERCENT).

SOME PEOPLE THINK THAT OLDER ADULTS ARE A DRAIN ON SOCIETY AND THE ECONOMY, THAT THEY CONSUME DOLLARS AND SERVICES AND DO NOT PRODUCE ANYTHING OF VALUE FOR OUR SOCIETY. THINKING ABOUT OLDER ADULTS THIS WAY, PLACES THEM AS "DEPENDENTS" MUCH AS CHILDREN ARE DEPENDENTS OF THE PRODUCING LABOUR FORCE. FACTS INDICATE, THAT FOR EVERY OLDER ADULT THERE ARE 5 ADULTS IN THE LABOUR FORCE. COMPARE THIS WITH THE FACT THAT FOR EVERY PERSON UNDER THE AGE OF 20, THERE ARE ONLY 1.5 PERSONS IN THE LABOUR FORCE. IN THESE TERMS, OLDER ADULTS ARE MUCH LESS A DRAIN ON SOCIETY THAN CHILDREN (ALTHOUGH WE HAVE TO ADMIT THAT THE INSTITUTIONAL COSTS PER OLD PERSON WHO IS ILL ARE MUCH GREATER THAN THOSE PER CHILD WHO SIMPLY RELIES ON SOCIETY FOR SCHOOLING).

HOWEVER, WE MUST REMEMBER THAT OLDER ADULTS PAY THEIR OWN WAY MOST OF THE TIME; THEY ARE NOW TAKING THE REWARD FOR THEIR PAST EFFORTS IN SOCIETY.

FOR THE MAJORITY OF OLDER ADULTS WHO WORKED AT A JOB, THEY WILL GET INCOME FROM THE CANADA PENSION PLAN AND PERHAPS SOME OTHER PENSION OR RETIREMENT INCOME. THIS MAKES THINGS EASIER THAN IF EACH INDIVIDUAL HAD TO PLAN THEIR OLD AGE INCOME COMPLETELY BY THEMSELVES. THE SYSTEM WAS DEVISED IN A WAY SO AS TO SHARE RETIREMENT COSTS BY HAVING PEOPLE CONTRIBUTE TO IT EARLIER IN LIFE.

In addition, in Canada we have the Old Age Pension which guarantees an income for people who have lived in Canada for at least 10 years and who are over 65 years of age. If they were unlucky in work, or unable to work, they may have a minimal existence, but it still will not necessitate living a beggarly life. Still, it is not very much money. People who rely <u>only</u> on this pension income are quite poor usually, so they then may apply to receive a small financial supplement from the Canadian and Manitoban governments.

THE FOLLOWING SECTION WILL PRESENT THE IMPORTANCE OF KNOWING AND TREATING OLDER ADULTS AS REAL PEOPLE.

KNOWING AND TREATING OLDER ADULTS AS REAL PEOPLE

UPON COMPLETION OF THIS SECTION, YOU WILL BE AWARE OF THE IMPORTANCE OF KNOWING AND TREATING OLDER ADULTS AS REAL PEOPLE.

STEREOTYPING, DISCRIMINATION AND ABUSE.

SOME PEOPLE LIKE TO TELL US THERE AREN'T ANY DIFFERENCES AMONG OLDER ADULTS AND THAT 65-74 YEAR OLDS ACT THE SAME AS THOSE 75-84 YEARS OLD. BASICALLY, THEY WILL BE DIFFERENT BECAUSE THE YOUNGER ONES WERE CHILDREN DURING WORLD WAR I AND THE OLDER ONES WOULD HAVE BEEN TEENAGERS OR ADULTS AT THAT TIME. ONE'S EXPERIENCES AS A YOUTH CAN MAKE QUITE A DIFFERENCE TO HOW ONE SEES LIFE.

OLDER ADULTS ARE OFTEN VICTIMS OF STEREOTYPING AND DISCRIMINATION. STEREOTYPING MEANS THAT YOU CONSIDER ALL OLDER ADULTS AS BEING AND/OR BEHAVING EXACTLY THE SAME WAY. FOR EXAMPLE, SOMEONE MIGHT SAY:

"ALL OLDER ADULTS TALK TOO MUCH" OR

"ALL OLDER ADULTS ARE RELIGIOUS".

IN FACT, JUST AS THEIR ARE DIFFERENCES IN YOUNGER YEARS, SOME OLDER ADULTS ARE TALKATIVE AT TIMES AND VERY QUIET AT OTHER TIMES. SOME OLDER ADULTS ARE DEEPLY RELIGIOUS AND FOR OTHERS THIS PART OF LIFE MAY NEVER HAVE BEEN IMPORTANT. THE STEREOTYPES OF AGING MODULE DISCUSSES THIS TOPIC IN MORE DEPTH.

DISCRIMINATION IS WHEN YOU START TO RESTRICT SOMEONE'S ACTIVITIES BASED ON A STEREOTYPE YOU HOLD ABOUT THEM. FOR INSTANCE, IF YOU THINK: "ALL OLDER ADULTS TALK TOO MUCH", YOU MIGHT NOT START A CONVERSATION WITH SOMEONE WHO LOOKS OLD SIMPLY BECAUSE YOU WERE AFRAID THEY WOULD NOT STOP TALKING. THIS WOULD BE QUITE UNFAIR TO THE OLDER PERSON WHO MAY BE SHY AND NEEDS TO BE DRAWN OUT INTO CONVERSATION.

SOMETIMES, BECAUSE OLDER ADULTS MOVE MORE SLOWLY THAN YOUNGER PEOPLE OR CONSIDER THINGS LONGER BEFORE TALKING, WE BECOME IMPATIENT WITH THEM. THAT IMPATIENCE

BECOMES VERY UNFAIR AS IT CAN LEAD TO OUR IGNORING OLDER ADULTS IN A PARTICULAR SETTING.

ABUSE OF THE OLDER ADULT IS A VERY IMPORTANT AND SERIOUS TOPIC IN MANITOBA. RESEARCH IN THIS AREA IS JUST BEGINNING, BUT WE ALREADY KNOW THAT MOST DISCOVERED ABUSE IS FINANCIAL (40 PERCENT), PSYCHOLOGICAL OR SOCIAL (38 PERCENT), OR PHYSICAL (22 PERCENT). ABUSE CAN BE COMMITTED BY ACTING AGAINST AN OLDER ADULT OR BY NEGLECTING THEM. IN MANITOBA, PUBLIC HEALTH NURSES AND SOCIAL WORKERS ARE MOST LIKELY TO DISCOVER ABUSIVE SITUATIONS.

EXAMPLES OF FINANCIAL ABUSE CAN BE CASHING A PENSION CHEQUE AND NOT TURNING IT ALL OVER TO THE OLDER ADULT, STEALING PROPERTY, OR OVERCHARGING FOR GOODS OR SERVICES.

THE MOST TYPICAL PSYCHO-SOCIAL ABUSE IS HUMILIATING, OR INTIMIDATING THE OLDER ADULT. LEAVING THE OLDER ADULT UNATTENDED (IF ATTENDANCE IS NEEDED), CONFINED, OR THREATENING THE OLDER ADULT IN ANY WAY, ARE OTHER EXAMPLES OF PSYCHO-SOCIAL ABUSE.

FINALLY, PHYSICAL ABUSE INCLUDES BEATING, TYING THE PERSON UP, PROVIDING INADEQUATE FOOD OR MEDICINE (OR GIVING TOO MUCH), AND NOT BEING THOUGHTFUL ABOUT POTENTIAL HAZARDS TO THE OLDER ADULT (SUCH AS SLIPPERY FLOORS OR STEPS).

ABUSERS TEND TO BE FAMILY MEMBERS OR SOMEONE THE OLDER ADULT LIVES WITH. THE CONDITIONS WHICH LEAD TO ABUSE MOST OFTEN ARE STRESSFUL AND ARE RELATED TO

ALCOHOLISM OR FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES.

TODAY, THERE IS NO EASY ANSWER AS TO HOW ONE SHOULD DEAL WITH A CASE OF ABUSE THAT WE MIGHT DISCOVER. CERTAINLY HAVING THE VICTIM AND ATTACKER SEEK COUNSELLING, AND ASSISTING IN REMOVING THE PROBLEM THAT CAUSES THE ABUSE TO HAPPEN ARE REASONABLE ACTIONS. SOCIAL WORKERS, PUBLIC HEALTH NURSES, CLERGY AND LAWYERS MAY BE ABLE TO HELP.

LASTLY, IN TREATING OLDER ADULTS AS REAL PEOPLE IT IS IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER THAT THEY GREW UP IN A TIME WHEN THINGS WERE MORE FORMAL THAN TODAY. PEOPLE DID NOT USE FIRST NAMES AS MUCH AS WE DO NOW. SO, CALLING MRS. JOHN WEBSTER "MARY" MAY FEEL INSULTING TO HER. CALLING HER "DEAR" MAY BE EVEN WORSE. IT IS PROBABLY A GOOD IDEA TO CALL OLDER ADULTS BY THEIR FULL NAMES UNTIL THEY ASK YOU TO USE A MORE EVERYDAY NAME. CALLING THEM "DEAR" OR IGNORING THEM IS LIKE TREATING THEM AS IF THEY ARE CHILDREN.

TIME PERSPECTIVE OF OLDER ADULTS.

ONE INTERESTING THING ABOUT OLDER ADULTS IS THAT THEY OFTEN SAY THEY ARE HAPPY WITH THEIR CIRCUMSTANCES WHEN IT DOES NOT LOOK TO US LIKE THEY SHOULD BE HAPPY. FOR EXAMPLE, AN OLDER ADULT MIGHT BE DELIGHTED WITH THEIR INCOME FROM THE GOVERNMENT EVEN THOUGH IT REPRESENTS VERY LITTLE TO LIVE ON. ANOTHER MIGHT BE VERY PLEASED WITH WHAT APPEARS TO BE A FAIRLY BROKEN DOWN HOUSE.

IN BOTH OF THE ABOVE CASES, WE HAVE TO REMEMBER THAT THE OLDER ADULT HAS A DIFFERENT POINT OF COMPARISON THAN WE DO. THEY MAY HAVE BEEN A LABOURER FOR THE TRAIN SYSTEM AND EARNING A LARGE SALARY FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS BEFORE THE PENSION PLAN WAS STARTED. EXPECTATIONS WERE THAT EVERYONE SHOULD PROVIDE FOR THEMSELVES BY SAVING FOR RETIREMENT. THEN, BECAUSE OF THE INTRODUCTION OF OUR FEDERAL PENSION SYSTEMS LONG AFTER THEY STARTED SAVING FOR RETIREMENT THEY REALIZE THAT THEY STILL HAVE, BESIDES THE ASSETS AND SAVINGS, A REGULAR INCOME THAT MAY BE SMALL BUT STILL FEELS LIKE A PAYCHECK. THIS, PERHAPS, FEELS LIKE A WINDFALL TO THEM AND MAKES THEM FEEL HAPPIER THAN A YOUNGER PERSON WITH DIFFERENT HISTORICAL EXPERIENCES WOULD.

FOR THE OTHER PERSON, BEING ABLE TO STAY IN THEIR OWN HOME, WITHOUT DEPENDING ON THE DAILY HELP OF ANYONE ELSE MAKES THEM FEEL INDEPENDENT. NO ONE TELLING THEM WHAT HOUR TO HAVE BREAKFAST OR WHEN THEY MAY GO FOR A WALK, MAY FEEL LIKE CONSIDERABLE FREEDOM TO THE OLDER ADULT.

THE FOLLOWING SECTION WILL PRESENT THREE ALTERNATIVE VIEWS OF HOW AN OLDER ADULT CAN OR SHOULD AGE SUCCESSFULLY.

ALTERNATIVE VIEWS OF HOW OLDER ADULTS CAN OR SHOULD AGE SUCCESSFULLY

UPON COMPLETION OF THIS SECTION, YOU WILL BE ABLE TO DESCRIBE THREE ALTERNATIVE VIEWS OF HOW AN OLDER ADULT CAN OR SHOULD AGE SUCCESSFULLY.

1. Older Adults Should Disengage.

THIS SCHOOL OF THOUGHT FEELS THAT OLDER ADULTS, IN AGREEMENT WITH SOCIETY AT LARGE, SHOULD DISCONTINUE THEIR INVOLVEMENT IN THE WORK FORCE AND OTHER CONTRIBUTIONS THAT THEY MADE IN EARLIER YEARS. IT IS SUGGESTED THAT THIS "WITHDRAWAL" OR "DISENGAGEMENT" BENEFITS THE OLD AND YOUNG ALIKE. FOR OLDER ADULTS, IT IS A TIME TO MENTALLY AND PHYSICALLY PUT THEIR LIVES IN ORDER AND PREPARE FOR DEATH. FOR SOCIETY AS A WHOLE, IT SETS ASIDE A GROUP OF ADULTS WHO ARE LESS ABLE TO "PRODUCE" GOODS WITH THE SAME EFFICIENCY AS YOUNGER PERSONS WHO APPARENTLY NEED JOBS MORE BADLY. THERE ARE SEVERAL OBVIOUS PROBLEMS OR CRITICISMS OF THIS POINT OF VIEW. FIRSTLY, IT CONSIDERS THE RIGHTS OF YOUNGER ADULTS TO BE GREATER THAN THE ONES OF OLDER ADULTS. SECONDLY, IT ASSUMES THAT ALL OLDER ADULTS NEED AND WANT TO SIT BACK AND REVIEW THEIR LIVES LIKE THE FINAL

CHAPTER OF A BOOK. FROM THE EARLIER PART OF THIS MODULE AND YOUR OWN EXPERIENCE, IT BECOMES CLEAR THAT OLDER ADULTS CAN BE VERY DIFFERENT FROM EACH OTHER, SO THAT THERE CAN NOT BE ONE RIGHT WAY FOR THEM TO LIVE OUT THEIR OLD AGE.

2. Older Adults Should Stay Active.

ANOTHER SCHOOL OF THOUGHT IS THAT OLDER ADULTS SHOULD REMAIN AS ACTIVE AS THEY WERE IN EARLIER YEARS. THAT IS, WHEN THEY RETIRE, THEY SHOULD TAKE ON NEW VOLUNTARY POSITIONS TO REPLACE THEIR EARLIER PAID CONTRIBUTIONS. THEY SHOULD WORK HARD AT MAINTAINING THEIR EARLIER LEVEL OF FITNESS AND PARTICIPATION IN SOCIETY. THIS VIEW, ALSO TREATS PEOPLE AS HOMOGENEOUSLY INTERESTED IN MAINTAINING AN ACTIVE LIFE STYLE (THAT IS, BEHAVING EXACTLY THE SAME AS ALL OTHER OLDER ADULTS). BOTH THE "DISENGAGEMENT" AND "ACTIVITY" VIEWS ARE CONSIDERED OUT-OF-DATE BY MOST EXPERTS BECAUSE THEY DON'T ALLOW FOR INDIVIDUALITY OR CREATIVITY IN PARTICULAR OLDER ADULTS.

3. Older Adults Should See The Same Style Of Life As Earlier

TODAY, A MORE POPULAR IDEA OF HOW ONE CAN LIVE A "GOOD LIFE" IN OLD AGE IS BY KEEPING THE GOOD ASPECTS OF EARLIER YEARS NEAR TO YOU IN OLD AGE. IF YOU ALWAYS HAD GOOD SOCIAL SKILLS AND ENJOYED GOING TO DANCES ONCE A MONTH, WHY STOP? IF ONE OF YOUR GIFTS WAS MAKING PEACE BETWEEN YOUR FAMILY MEMBERS, KEEP ON DOING THAT.

IT IS NOT ALWAYS GOOD TO KEEP THINGS THE SAME. IF YOU WERE A LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT AND FOUND THAT VERY REWARDING WORK, YOU MAY WELL WANT TO REDESIGN YOUR BACKYARD AND MAKE IT INTO A JAPANESE GARDEN. OR YOU MAY WANT TO GET INVOLVED IN PLANNING A COMMUNITY PARK. IF YOU ENJOYED ADMINISTRATIVE WORK, YOU MAY WANT TO TAKE UP ORGANIZING THE LOCAL POLITICAL VOLUNTEER SQUAD. WHAT YOU FREQUENTLY CAN DO IS KEEP AN IMPORTANT ASPECT (OR THE ESSENCE) OF YOUR WORK THAT MADE YOURSELF HAPPY IN EARLIER YEARS AND APPLY THAT TO THE LATER LIFE TIMES.

THIS DOES NOT NECESSARILY MEAN THAT THERE CAN BE NO CHANGE IN LIFESTYLE IN LATER YEARS, HOWEVER, THE CHANGE SHOULD BE CONSISTENT WITH THE POSITIVE ASPECTS OF EARLIER YEARS.

ANOTHER IMPORTANT THING ABOUT OLDER ADULTS IS WHAT THEY HAVE TO OFFER TO SOCIETY. SOMETIMES IT IS EASY TO THINK OF OLDER ADULTS AS USELESS ... WORTHLESS ... BUT WE NEED TO THINK A LITTLE HARDER ABOUT WHY THAT IS, AND WHETHER OR NOT THEY SHOULD SUFFER BECAUSE OF OUR ATTITUDES.

THE FOLLOWING SECTION WILL DISCUSS THE CHANGING ROLES OF OLDER ADULTS IN TODAY'S SOCIETY AND THE HISTORY OR FORCES BEHIND THESE CHANGES.

CHANGING ROLES OF OLDER ADULTS

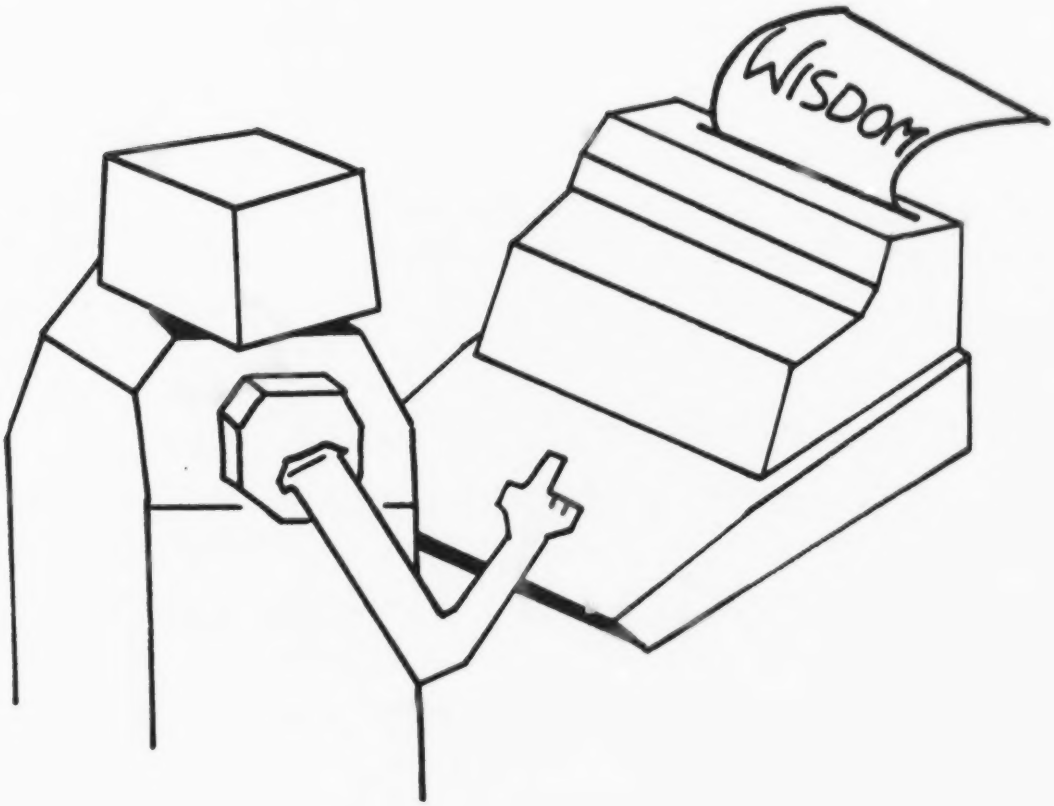
UPON COMPLETION OF THIS SECTION, YOU WILL BE AWARE OF THE CHANGING ROLE OF OLDER ADULTS IN TODAY'S SOCIETY AND THE HISTORY OR FORCES BEHIND THESE CHANGES.

THE THREE FORCES

A NUMBER OF PEOPLE TELL US THAT THE PRESENT LOW STATUS GIVEN TO OLDER ADULTS IS DUE TO THE MODERNIZATION OF SOCIETY. SPECIFICALLY, THERE ARE THREE FORCES WHICH HAVE LED TO OUR CURRENT, FAIRLY LOW APPRECIATION OF OLDER ADULTS.

THE FIRST IS THAT AS TIME HAS PAST WE HAVE DEVELOPED HIGHER EDUCATIONAL LEVELS AND VERY SOPHISTICATED ECONOMIC TECHNOLOGY. BECAUSE IN THE LAST 200 YEARS WE HAVE SHIFTED FROM WORK ROLES THAT DEPENDED ON CRAFTSMAN SKILLS AND LENGTHY APPRENTICESHIPS TO TRAINING IN ONE OR TWO YEARS OF CLASSROOM EXPERIENCE, WE NO LONGER HAVE THE SAME LEVEL OF NEED FOR APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMS. THOROUGHLY EXPERIENCED MASTERS OF THE GUILDS HAVE BEEN REPLACED BY QUICK-STUDY TEACHERS. THE WISDOM OF YEARS DOES NOT SEEM TO BE VALUED AS MUCH TODAY AS FACTUAL KNOWLEDGE. THE SHIFT TO AUTOMATED MACHINES AND COMPUTER-RUN OPERATIONS IN THE WORK WORLD MAKE MANY

SKILLS UNNECESSARY. THIS REMOVES FROM THE OLDER ADULT A VALUABLE CONTRIBUTION THAT THEY COULD MAKE TO SOCIETY. IN OTHER WORDS, WE APPARENTLY HAVE FOUND WAYS OF GAINING KNOWLEDGE AND WISDOM WITHOUT THEM.



THE <u>SECOND</u> FORCE IS THAT OUR UNDERSTANDING OF HEALTH AND SICKNESS HAS GROWN IN THE PAST 200 YEARS. WE NOW HAVE GREAT CONTROL OVER THE PREVENTION OF ACUTE SICKNESS, THE SERIOUSNESS OF SICKNESS, AND THE SPREAD OF

SICKNESS. THIS MEANS THAT INSTEAD OF DYING FROM A BOUT OF INFLUENZA WE SIMPLY ARE IN BED FOR A DAY OR TWO WHEN THE FLU HITS. INSTEAD OF HAVING EPIDEMICS OF BUBONIC PLAGUE, WE SEE THE FLU "GOING AROUND." THE "QUICK" ILLNESSES LIKE FLU ARE REPLACED BY LONG-TERM ILLNESSES LIKE HEART PROBLEMS, STROKE DISABILITIES, AND CANCERS. THIS MEANS THAT OLDER ADULTS WILL LIVE A LONGER TIME PAST THE ACTIVE LABOUR FORCE AND FAMILY-RAISING PERIOD OF LIFE. WHILE A LONGER LIFE SEEMS TO BE A GOOD THING, IT IS DECREASINGLY FILLED WITH IMPORTANT ROLES, AND OLD AGE BECOMES ASSOCIATED WITH MORE CHRONIC SICKNESS.

A THIRD CHANGE THAT HAS TAKEN PLACE IS THAT OF URBANIZATION. AS THE WORKPLACE HAS MOVED AWAY FROM THE FAMILY FARM AND COTTAGE INDUSTRIES, TO LARGE BUSINESSES, CITIES HAVE DEVELOPED AND ARE GROWING LARGER ALL THE TIME. AS WE BECOME DEEPLY INVOLVED IN SPECIALIZED OCCUPATIONS, WE ARE MORE LIKELY TO MOVE FROM JOB TO JOB, OFTEN FROM THE COUNTRY TO THE CITY, AND CITY TO CITY LIKE NOMADS. THIS MEANS THAT WE ARE LIKELY TO LEAVE THE PLACE WHERE WE GREW UP, THUS YOUNGER ADULTS IN OUR FAMILIES ARE MOVING AROUND TO OBTAIN SPECIALIZED EDUCATION OR TAKE ON NEW JOBS. THE TRANSIENT NATURE OF TODAYS WORKING POPULATION MEANS OLDER ADULTS ALSO LOSE SOME CONTACT WITH THEIR GRANDCHILDREN, AND THE ABILITY TO PASS THEIR KNOWLEDGE ALONG TO THAT GENERATION. THEY LOSE ANOTHER "ROLE" IN THIS WAY -- THEY LOSE ANOTHER ASPECT THAT ONCE WAS AN IMPORTANT PART OF GROWING OLD.

Planning For Old Age

This picture of how older adults are treated today compared to times long past is quite negative. It is still possible to think about the roles of older adults as important but in more specific ways. In particular, we spend more time learning to be retired. This means people in their 50s and early 60s may take retirement courses, plan to buy new leisure vehicles, become members of more clubs, and pick up an interest in hobbies that had to be neglected in earlier years. Without the pressure of the workplace and family, many couples find their marriages tested at first, but much stronger after the initial adjustment period is over.

A frequent complaint of young and middle-aged adults is that their parents are too busy, after retirement, to see them. The increasing ability to concentrate on their social lives means older adults may become more recognized in their communities as volunteers, for their political involvements, and simply being a network focus for neighbourhood news and information. So, while a lot of restrictions have been placed on older adults today, they also have a lot of new opportunities available to them.

SUMMARY

It is evident throughout this module, and many of the other modules in Block A that social factors have a strong influence on the older adults total well being.

The Demography of older adults shows a larger proportion of woman than men are widowed and live on a limited income.

A knowledge of the older adult's past life experiences will lead to a better understanding of the older adults' views and to an acceptance of them for what they are, unique individuals. Rather than categorizing them into a large homogeneous group with the same attitudes, needs and desires.

Older adults of today have seen more changes in technology and styles of living than any other generation. Along with these changes there has been a reduction in the number of active roles available to them in our society. However, in recent years many older adults are becoming more and more creative in how they develop their plans for old age.

More than anything else, this module has shown that older adults like all adults have individual personalities, interests, experiences and behaviours.

APPENDIX

Selected Readings

Binstock, R.H. & Shanas, E. (Eds.). (1976). *Handbook of Aging and the Social Sciences.* Toronto, Van Nostrand Reinhold.

Blythe, Ronald. (1980). *The View in Winter: Reflections on Old Age.* Published by Penguin Books.

Butler, N. Robert. (1975). *Why Survive? Being Old in America* Published by Harper and Row.

Curtin, R. Sharon. (1972). *Nobody Ever Died of Old Age.* Published by Little, Brown and Company.

Dunlop, D.P. (1980). *Mandatory Retirement Policy:A Human Rights Dilemma?* Conference Board of Canada, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada.

Fischer, Hackett David. (1978). *Growing Old In America.* Published by Oxford University Press.

Gutman, Gloria M. (Ed.) (1982). *Canada's Changing Age Structure:Implications for the Future.* Burnaby: SFU Publications.

Jury, Dan and Mark. (1978). *Gramp.* Published by Penguin Books.

Marshall, V. W. (1980). *Aging in Canada.* Fitzhenry & Whiteside Ltd., Don Mills, Ontario.

Matthews, H. Sarah. (1979). *The Social World of Old Women: Management of Self-Identity.* Published by Sage Publications.

Novak, Mark. (1985). *Successful Aging: The Myths, Realities and Future of Aging in Canada.* Penguin Books.

Roadburg, A. (1985). *Aging:Retirement, Leisure and Work in Canada.* Toronto:Methuen Publications.

Stone, L.O. & MacLean, M.J. (1979). *Future Income Prospects for Canada's Senior Citizens.* Butterworth Publications.

The Provincial Fact Book on Aging - Manitoba. (1985). Prepared for the Fourth Manitoba Conference on Aging, Winnipeg, Canada.

Additional Resources

Place: Centre On Aging
338 Isbister Building
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3T 2N2

A SERIES OF AUDIOTAPES

Description

Audiotape available on - "Getting Older: The Social Choices Ahead." Presented by Dr. Nathan Keyfitz, Rosenstadt, Professor, University of Toronto; Andelot Professor of Sociology, Emeritus, Harvard University, Lazarus Professor of Social Demography, Emeritus, OSU.

Description

Audiotape available on "Clothing Problems and Preferences of Women over the Age of 65." Presented by Cecilia Gonzales, Professor, Department of Clothing and Textiles, Faculty of Human Ecology, University of Manitoba, October 28, 1983.

Description

Audiotape available on - "The Family as Caregivers." Community concern presented by Phyllis Olsen, Continuing Care Co-ordinator, Interlake Region, Manitoba Department of Health. Researcher's response presented by Dr. Neena L. Chappell, Centre on Aging and Department of Sociology, University of Manitoba, May 5, 1983.

Description

Audiotape available on - "Victimization of the Elderly." Community concern presented by Janet Locke, Co-ordinator, Older Victim Assistance Service, Age and Opportunity Centre, Inc. Winnipeg. Researcher's response presented by Dr. Mike Thomas, Psychological Service Centre, University of Manitoba. May 5, 1983.

Additional Resources Cont'd

Place: National Film Board of Canada
245 Main St.
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3C 1A7

The Business of Aging

A sobering look at the conditions that exist in many Canadian nursing homes. This documentary examines the lonely life of residents, the quality of care, and the economics of the business endeavor, be it state or privately operated.

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26 minutes:35 seconds 106C0181 055

Nell and Fred

Two old people consider the pros and cons of entering an institution for the aged. Their deliberations, and the final outcome, will stimulate students to think about the psychological and social implications of such a decision, as well as the cost. Filmed in black and white.

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28 minutes:05 seconds 106B 0171 023

Growing Old

Should the aged be "looked after" or encouraged to do for themselves? Is retirement healthy for everyone? This film raises many questions concerning "growing old" in urban North America and, from the practical examples shown, suggests where answers might be found. The picture is far from bleak, but even for the most able old people there are problems to be solved. From the series A Time to Consider.

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15 minutes:08 seconds colour 106C 0172 582

On our own

In Canada, four out of five women will live alone at some time in their adult lives; three out of five are likely to live below the poverty line. This film encourages women to plan realistically for their older years by focusing on two women; one, divorced and in her mid-fifties, the other, 95 and widowed half her life. They find themselves unprepared - both psychologically and financially - to deal with life alone. The film shows some of the community resources available to them.

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26 minutes:30 seconds colour 106C 0184 018

Additional Resources Cont'd

Place: NFB of Canada Cont'd

For Gentlemen Only

This is a short fictional film focusing on the lives of two retired men who are residents of a seedy hotel in the downtown area of any North American city. Their lives are unexpectedly exposed to change. The film shows how they react to, and cope with this change.

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27 minutes:40 seconds 106C 0176 144

All of Our Lives

All of our lives examines the reasons why many women face economic hardship and emotional isolation in old age. It is a film about past dreams and, for the most part, about unexpected realities. Elderly women from a variety of backgrounds and circumstances recall their girlhood ideals, and contrast them with the experience of their actual adult lives. The film challenges audiences to re-evaluate the undervalued and often "invisible" world of child-rearing and work in the home, and shows some alternative ways older women have found to live their lives.

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29 minutes:55 seconds color 106C 0183 562

Acknowledgements

The Elderly Service Workers' Training Project wishes to express appreciation of the following individuals whose knowledge and expertise in the aging sector has contributed to the overall effort of the Project.

Content Advisory Committee

Ms. Margaret Barbour, Resource Specialist, Manitoba Dept. of Health, Continuing Care.
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Ms. Donna Morrison, Coordinator, Gerontology Community Workers Program.
Ms. Margaret Redston, Standards Officer, Manitoba Health Services Commission, Long Term Care Programs.
Ms. Nicole Schmid, Director of Social Services, R.S.W. Centre Hospitalier Tache Nursing Home.

Actors and Actresses

Ms. Doris Benson
Mr. Will Dickson, Director, Studio 2 Theatre Group
Ms. Margaret Downie
Mr. Sheldon Fink
Ms. Primrose Hopkins
Ms. Sheila Maurer
Ms. Marianne Neild
Ms. Madge Murray Roberts
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Video Production

Program Productions Communications Systems, University of Manitoba

TITLES OF THE TRAINING PROJECT'S MODULES

BLOCK A: BASIC KNOWLEDGE OF AGING PROCESS

A.1 PROGRAM PLANNING FOR OLDER ADULTS
A.2 STEREOTYPES OF AGING
A.3 HUMAN DEVELOPMENT ASPECTS OF AGING
A.4 SOCIAL ASPECTS OF AGING
A.5 PHYSIOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF AGING
A.6 DEATH AND BEREAVEMENT
A.7 PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF AGING
A.8 CONFUSION AND THE OLDER ADULT
A.9 NUTRITION AND THE OLDER ADULT
A.10 LISTENING AND THE OLDER ADULT

BLOCK B: CULTURAL GERONTOLOGY

B.1 UKRAINIAN CULTURE
B.1.1 COMMUNICATION AND ADJUSTMENT
B.1.2 COMMUNICATION AND ADJUSTMENT

B.2 GERMAN CULTURE
B.2.1 COMMUNICATION AND ADJUSTMENT

B.3 FRENCH CULTURE
B.3.1 COMMUNICATION AND ADJUSTMENT

B.4 NATIVE CULTURE
B.4.1 COMMUNICATION AND ADJUSTMENT
B.4.2 COMMUNICATION AND ADJUSTMENT

BLOCK C: WORK ENVIRONMENT

C.1 WORK ENVIRONMENT I

NOTE: MOST MODULE'S ARE AVAILABLE IN TWO FORMATS:

A) PRINT FORMAT

OR

B) INTERACTIVE VIDEO (COMPUTER ASSISTED TELEVISION) FORMAT

RESOURCE MATERIALS:

HANDBOOK OF SELECTED CASE STUDIES
USER'S GUIDE